

Message Text

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ACTION IO-14

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USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY GABORONE
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAPE TOWN 1065

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDEV, WA, SF
SUBJ: NAMIBIA: MAY 24 DISCUSSION WITH ADMINISTRATOR-GENERAL

1. SUMMARY: JUSTICE M.T. STEYN, SOUTH AFRICA'S A-G FOR NAMIBIA, TOLD AMB MCHENRY MAY 24 THAT HE WAS COMMITTED TO THE TERN SETTLEMENT PROPOSAL BUT FELT "TIME WAS OF THE ESSENCE" IN GETTING SWAPO ON BOARD, WITH THE NEXT MOVE UP TO THE WESTERN FIVE. HE FORECAST UNSPECIFIED DIRE CONSEQUENCES IN THE EVENT OF "ONE MORE POLITICAL MURDER." STEYN DISASSOCIATED HIMSELF FROM THE SAG DECISION TO RAID SWAPO BASES IN ANGOLA BUT TOOK FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR PREVENTIVE DETENTION DECREE AG-26. MCHENRY EMPHASIZED NEED TO GET SETTLEMENT
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EFFORT BACK ON TRACKS QUICKLY AND FOR POSITIVE STEPS FROM AG AND THE SA. MEETING REINFORCED OUR PREVIOUS IMPRESSION OF STEYN AS A SINCERE MAN BUT AT HEART A SAG OFFICIAL SERIOUSLY LIMITED IN HIS UNDERSTANDING OF NAMIBIAN POLITICAL DYNAMICS AND THE INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. AMB MCHENRY, CAPE TOWN POLCONS TAYLOR, AND NACH OF AF/S

MET WITH SOUTH AFRICA'S ADMINISTRATOR-GENERAL FOR NAMIBIA, JUSTICE M.T. STEYN, AND HIS ADVISOR JOHN VIALI IN WINDHOEK MAY 24. STEYN SAID HE WAS FULLY COMMITTED TO THE WESTERN SETTLEMENT PROPOSAL, AND HAD BEEN INFLUENTIAL IN GETTING THE SAG TO ACCEPT IT. HOWEVER, SINCE SOUTH AFRICA HAD ACCEPTED, HE FELT THAT IT WAS NOW UP TO THE FIVE TO MAKE THE NEXT MOVE AND BRING IN SWAPO. THIS WOULD HAVE TO BE DONE ON AN URGENT BASIS SINCE CONTINUED UNCERTAINTY WAS, THE AG CLAIMED, CAUSING RAPID DETERIORATION IN THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SITUATION IN NAMIBIA. "TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE," HE SAID, AND "ONE MORE POLITICAL MURDER" WOULD HAVE THE MOST DIRE -- IF UNSPECIFIED -- CONSEQUENCES.

3. IN REPLY, MCHENRY TOLD STEYN THAT FOLLOWING THE SAG'S ACCEPTANCE OF THE FIVE'S PROPOSAL, GREAT PRESSURE HAD BUILT ON SWAPO FROM THE FRONT LINE, NORDICS, AND ELSEWHERE, AND WE HAD PROBABLY BEEN WITHIN DAYS OF GETTING AGREEMENT FROM SWAPO WHEN SOUTH AFRICA HAD RAIDED CASSINGA, CAUSING A SEVERE SETBACK TO OUR SETTLEMENT EFFORT. FURTHERMORE, DESPITE SOME EARLIER WELCOME MOVES TOWARDS DISMANTLING DISCRIMINATORY AND REPRESSIVE REGULATIONS, THE A-G'S PROCLAMATION AND USE OF PREVENTIVE DETENTION DECREE AG-26 AND UNHELPFUL PUBLIC REMARKS BY HIM ABOUT SWAPO HAD CAST DOUBT ON HIS IMPARTIALITY AND COMPOUNDED THE FIVE'S CURRENT DIFFICULTIES. MCHENRY TOLD THE AG THAT THE FIVE WERE TRYING TO GET THEIR SETTLEMENT EFFORT BACK ON THE TRACKS AND THAT IT WAS ESSENTIAL THAT THE AG AND THE

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SAG REFRAIN FROM FURTHER UNHELPFUL ACTIONS AND STATEMENTS, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME CONSIDERING POSITIVE STEPS TO REBUILD AN ATMOSPHERE OF CONFIDENCE ESSENTIAL TO GETTING SWAPO ON BOARD.

4. COMMENTING ON THE CASSINGA RAID, STEYN SAID HE HAD BEEN INFORMED OF IT ONLY AFTER THE DECISION TO GO AHEAD HAD BEEN MADE AND HAD HAD NO ROLE IN PLANNING IT. HE DID NOT MAKE MUCH EFFORT TO JUSTIFY THE RAID BUT DID ASSERT THAT HE WAS CONVINCED, BASED ON AFTER-ACTION DISCUSSIONS WITH SADF PERSONNEL AND PRISONERS AND STUDY OF CAPTURED DOCUMENTS, THAT CASSINGA WAS A MILITARY TARGET.

5. ON DECREE AG-26, STEYN SAID THAT HE HAD ISSUED IT FOR TWO BASIC REASONS: (A) THE FABRIC OF LAW AND ORDER IN NAMIBIA WAS IN DANGER OF CRUMBLING AS EVIDENCED BY A SERIES OF SERIOUS ACTS OF VIOLENCE ALLEGEDLY CAUSED BY SWAPO, AND (B) HE WANTED SECURITY DETENTIONS TO TAKE PLACE UNDER HIS AUTHORITY RATHER THAN THAT OF THE SAG, A POSITIVE STEP IN HIS VIEW. HE TRACED THE GENESIS OF AG-26 BACK TO HIS HAVING HEARD SWAPO SUPPORTERS CHEER NEWS OF KAPUUNO'S MURDER. (ON THE INVESTIGATION OF THE MURDER, THE AG SAID "DOCKETS" HAD BEEN PERPARED OF THE

PERSONS MBUT THAT HE HAD NO INFO ON WHEN ANY OF THEM MIGHT BE CHARGED. THIS WAS A MATTER FOR THE ATTORNEY GENERAL TO DECIDE, HE SAID.)

6. THE AG DISCUSSED AT LENGTH HIS VIEW OF THE CURRENT SITUATION, ONE IN WHICH HE SEES HIMSELF REACTING TO SWAPO-SPONSORED VIOLENCE. HE SUGGESTED THAT ANGOLA AND ITS EASTERN EUROPEAN ALLIES MIGHT BE THE ROOT SOURCE OF THE TROUBLE AND AT ONE POINT HINTED AT A POSSIBLE LINK BETWEEN SWAPO'S ACTS AND RECENT TROUBLE IN SHABA. MCHENRY STRESSED THAT WE DEPLORED ALL VIOLENT ACTS AND THAT IN ASSESSING WHAT WAS HAPPENING IN NAMIBIA, IT WAS NECESSARY TO CONSIDER THE FULL CYCLE OF VIOLENCE: A REPRESSIVE ACTION BY THE SAG FOLLOWED BY SWAPO RETALIATION. CONFIDENTIAL

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7. COMMENT: THE MEETING REINFORCED OUR EARLIER IMPRESSION OF STEYN AS A SINCERE, WELL-INTENTIONED SAG OFFICIAL LIMITED IN OUTLOOK. TRY AS HE MAY TO BE IMPARTIAL, HE IS DOING SO IN A NARROW AFRIKANER CONTEXT OF LAW AND ORDER. STEYN'S LACK OF IN-DEPTH KNOWLEDGE OF INTERNATIONAL FACTORS INVOLVED IN THE FIVE'S SETTLEMENT EFFORTS WAS STRIKING. WHILE HE TALKS OF HIMSELF AS BEING "HAMMERED FROM BOTH SIDES" -- BY AKTUR AND SWAPO -- THE REALITY IS THAT HE PERCEIVES THE MAIN THREAT TO BE SWAPO AND HAS ACTED ACCORDINGLY THROUGH WORD AND DEED, WITH POSSIBLE SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES FOR OUR SETTLEMENT EFFORT AND FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF OUR PROPOSAL SHOULD WE REACH THAT STAGE. NELSON

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